

# Reading Toolkit: Grade 4 Objective 2.A.4.c

Standard 2.0 Comprehension of Informational Text

Topic A. Comprehension of Informational Text

Indicator 4. Determine important ideas and messages in informational texts

Objective c. State and support main ideas and messages

Assessment Limits:

The whole text or a portion of the text

The whole text or a portion of the text

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## Lesson Seeds

### Reading Grade 4 Objective 2.A.4.c

#### Activities

- Provide students with informational text/s. Explain to students that they are able to better understand an author's most significant points in written text by identifying the main idea of each paragraph. As students read their individual texts, they are instructed to underline the main ideas or supporting details of at least four different paragraphs. Classroom discussion should lead them to the following conclusions: The main idea may be stated at the beginning, middle, or end of the paragraph. It may also not be directly stated, but suggested by details.
- Provide students an informational passage from which all subheadings have been removed and replaced with numbers. Have students read each section and write a subheading that captures the main idea of that section. Share the subheadings with the entire class to determine their accuracy or appropriateness.
- Teacher will provide students with an informational passage. Before reading provide students with the topic of the text's message. As students read, they should highlight, post note, or record any information relating to the topic. Once reading is complete, discuss with students everything the author says about the topic. From this information conclude the author's message.
- Read an informational passage. After reading is complete, show students a list of statements drawn from the passage which include statements of detail, example, main idea, and message. Have students categorize the statements according to their purpose. Share the results and discuss any conflicts to ensure understanding. Take message statement/s and return to the text to find supporting details.

## Clarification

### Reading Grade 4 Indicator 2.A.4

To show proficiency of the skills stated in this indicator, a reader will express an understanding of the key points or thoughts in the text, which are **the important ideas and messages**. These are sometimes directly stated in the text, but for more complex texts, a reader will determine the implied, important ideas and messages by synthesizing ideas across the text(s).

In order to understand important ideas or messages in a text, a reader should **determine the author's apparent purpose for writing**. The author's purpose, either implied or directly stated, is the main reason for the text. Most authors write to inform, persuade, or to express personal ideas relative to his or her selected topic. Authors write for different audiences; an author's intended audience should be apparent through the author's choice of topic, diction, organization, and graphic aids. Knowing these features and the intended audience for a text helps a reader determine a purpose for reading, which will enhance a reader's understanding of the text as a whole.

Once a reader understands an author's or text's purpose, he or she can speculate as to **how someone might use the text**. To do so, a reader explores the application of the text to personal or content-specific use. A critical reader applies the text for personal or content specific use and to determine issues and ideas within a text or across texts and their personal and societal implications.

The ability to **distinguish between facts and opinions** is a prerequisite reading skill for **identifying and explaining an author's argument, viewpoint, or perspective**. A fact can be defined as something that can be proven true while an opinion is a belief or feeling about a subject. Authors use a combination of facts and opinions in their writing, most often using facts to support their opinions. Once a reader can identify an author's opinion on a topic, the main idea or message can be more clearly understood. An author's opinion with the evidence, details, and examples used to support the opinion become the **author's argument, viewpoint, or perspective**.

When **stating and supporting main ideas and messages**, a reader must first identify the main idea of the text. To do so, a reader must identify the topic or subject of the text, which is often evident in the title or first paragraph(s) of an informational text. Then, after reading an entire text, a reader must identify the main point that the author/text makes about the topic or subject. The author's message is the same thing as the main idea; however, a message is usually present in more complex, subjective text. A message is often more author-centered, whereas a main idea is more text-centered. If the main idea or message is not directly stated in the text, a reader must use the details and information in the text to infer the main idea or message. A reader supports the main idea or message by using details from the text that relate to it and that help him/her understand the main idea. This process can be done for the entire text or for a small portion of text.

**Summarizing or paraphrasing a text or a portion of a text** is an essential skill for a reader when comprehending informational text. A reader is better able to determine the important ideas and messages in text if he/she is able to summarize it. To do so, a reader must state the main idea in his/her own words and then select only details from the text that contribute to the identified main idea. Paraphrasing, when a reader restates an idea in his or her own words, is a key step to summarizing a text. This can be done for a small portion of text, such as a paragraph, as well as for a chapter or the entire text.

Authors use details and examples in their writing to clarify, highlight, or enhance their ideas. A critical reader will be able to identify **information not related, or peripheral, to the main idea of a text**. Doing so will help a reader disregard redundant as well as extraneous information when summarizing the text or identifying the main idea or message. Especially for complex text, a reader may analyze the effect this extraneous information has on the main idea or message and make decisions or draw conclusions about why an author used that information. This skill is useful as readers develop their own opinions and ideas relative to a text.

When a reader compares and contrasts textual ideas, elements, and features within and across texts, he/she is **identifying relationships between and among ideas**. Authors also organize their ideas to show a sequence of ideas or to show cause and effect. Once a reader identifies a relationship that exists among ideas in a text, he/she can think more analytically about that relationship. A critical reader will also make **connections to prior knowledge**, which are the beliefs or background a reader brings to a text.

In order to **draw conclusions about and make generalizations from informational text**, a reader should first be able to state the main idea as well as to summarize a text. When a reader draws conclusions, he/she uses information from the text—such as the text patterns or text features—that can be either stated or implied. A reader makes a judgment or a decision that is new to him or her since it is not directly stated in the text. A conclusion or generalization is dependent on the information in a text but is external to it.

An ability **to connect text to prior knowledge or experience** helps a reader identify personally with a text. A reader identifies similarities between what is being described, explained, or narrated and what he or she has experienced, heard or read about. A critical reader forms opinions about the content within a text during and after reading and is then able to develop his or her own ideas about information from a text.

As readers have more experiences with these skills and with increasingly complex texts, their cognitive abilities will increase as well. Experienced readers will be able not only to determine a main idea or message, but also to develop skills at **analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating a main idea or message** by making connections to ideas and messages expressed in other texts or to their personal experiences.

Public Release #1 - Selected Response (SR) Item

Handout(s):

- Chinese Almond Cookies

Reading Grade 4 Objective 2.A.4.c

Read "Chinese Almond Cookies" and answer the following question. Which step tells about mixing the wet ingredients?

- A. Step 2
- B. Step 3
- C. Step 4
- D. Step 5

Correct Answer:

C

## Sample Item #1 Brief Constructed Response (BCR) Item with Annotated Student Responses

### Question

Read the article 'Brainy Birds' and answer the following question.

What other title would show the main idea of this article? Explain how your title would show the main idea. In your response, use information from the article that supports your explanation.

### Annotated Student Responses

I think one other good  
 title could be "Problem solvers"  
 because it sounds like  
 ravens solve hundreds  
 of problems almost  
 every single  
 day.

Annotation: The student identifies an appropriate title "Problem solvers" which indicates understanding of the main idea. The student states that "ravens solve hundreds of problems" but does not provide any details from the article to support this. There are several examples evident in the text that could have been used to support the title suggested by the student. For example, "if they can't find one kind of favorite food, they learn to eat something else."

Another title could be "Smart birds."  
 That could be because ravens  
 are very smart because they  
 can copy sounds and even  
 human speech.

Annotation: The student identifies a reasonable title, "Smart birds," but the word "smart" is merely a synonym for the word "brainy." This title could have been generated without reading the article. The student attempts to use information from the article, "copy sounds and even human speech," to support the title; however, this is a misreading of the article. A careful reader would discover that the article actually contradicts this statement by saying, "Copying sounds may not be a sign of smarts...." The article does contain many points of information which when developed could add support to the response. For example, the article points out that "Ravens play more than most other birds," "have excellent memories," and "have a large brain." Any of these points, when developed by the student, would show a greater understanding of the main idea of the article.

Another title would be "A Ravens Brain" because  
 it tells what a raven can do and how smart an  
 raven is they tell "sounds" ravens can make, and how  
 heavy it's brain is. It can also swing by its  
 beak or feet and it can ride like a roller  
 coaster in the air. It said in the text that  
 and ravens brain is  $\frac{1}{5}$  larger than an  
 chickens brain.

Annotation: The student suggests a title for the article, "A Raven's Brain." This title looks like a good title at first; however, it does not relate to a main idea of the entire article which is more about aspects of ravens' behavior than about the characteristics of a raven's brain. In an effort to support the title, the student selects details from the article that relate specifically to the brain: "how heavy it's brain is" and that the "...ravens brain is  $\frac{1}{5}$  larger than a chickens brain." The student also includes some additional information from the article perhaps to lengthen the response, but this information is irrelevant.



## Handouts

## Chinese Almond Cookies

By David C. King

Each region of China has its own special style of cooking. When Chinese immigrants began arriving in the United States in the mid-1800s, they brought with them many of the delicious recipes from their homeland. Some of the immigrants established restaurants and bakeries. Chinese food soon became popular throughout the country. In traditional Chinese cooking, the main meal of the day would usually include fruit for dessert. Sweets, like the tasty cookies you'll make in this recipe, were usually served with afternoon tea.

## INGREDIENTS

1/4 pound butter or vegetable shortening,  
softened  
3/4 cup sugar  
1 egg  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla  
1 tablespoon whole milk or light cream  
1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour  
dash of salt (about 1/8 teaspoon)  
1/4 teaspoon baking powder  
3/4 teaspoon almond extract (available in the  
spice section of supermarkets)  
36 blanched almond halves or 18 whole almonds  
cut in half

## EQUIPMENT

measuring cup  
measuring spoons  
2 medium-size mixing bowls  
wooden mixing spoon  
eggbeater  
2 cookie sheets  
paring knife (to be used by an adult for  
cutting whole almonds)  
teaspoon  
adult helper

## YIELDS

about 3 dozen cookies

## STEPS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Place the softened butter in a mixing bowl and stir it well with a mixing spoon to make it creamy. If you use vegetable shortening, you won't need to stir it much.
3. Add the sugar to the butter or shortening, a little at a time. As you add the sugar, stir constantly. Keep stirring until the mixture lightens in color.
4. Add the egg, vanilla, and milk or cream. Beat the mixture well with an eggbeater until all the ingredients are blended.
5. Place the flour, salt, and baking powder in the other mixing bowl. Stir the mixture with a clean, dry spoon.
6. Add the flour mixture to the first mixture, a little at a time, stirring constantly.
7. Add the almond extract and mix the ingredients well with the eggbeater.
8. Using one slightly rounded teaspoon for each cookie, place the dough on ungreased cookie sheets. Flatten each cookie a little with the spoon and allow about an inch of space between them.
9. Press a half almond onto the center of each cookie. If you use whole almonds, ask your adult helper to cut them in half the long way with a paring knife.
10. With the adult's help, bake the cookies for 8 to 10 minutes. Check the cookies frequently. They're done when they turn golden brown.

## Brainy Birds

By Cynthia Berger

What's the world's smartest bird? Most scientists say it's the common raven. One sign of ravens' brain power is their adaptability. That means that they can change their behavior to solve new problems.

For example, if they can't find one kind of favorite food, they learn to eat something else. In fact, they eat almost any food they can get their beaks on. Their foods include small animals, fruit, seeds, eggs, garbage, and dead meat. And because they eat so many different foods, they can live in lots of different places around the world: deserts, mountains, forests, cities, and even the cold Arctic.



The size of a raven's brain may help explain why the bird is so smart. It has a large brain compared to its body size. For example, a chicken weighs twice as much as a raven. But its brain is only one fifth as heavy as the raven's brain.

Quork-quork-quork! Oo-oo. Rap-rap-rap. Kek-kek-kek. Honk honk! Ravens make lots of different sounds. Scientists have counted as many as 80 different sounds. Ravens can copy sounds too. One raven learned to imitate all the dogs in a neighborhood. They can also imitate other kinds of birds, the sound of falling water, human speech, motorcycles, and even the ringing of the bell on an ice cream truck. Copying sounds may not be a sign of smarts, but it sure makes ravens interesting to have around!

Ravens play more than most other birds, and this may be a sign of intelligence. They seem to have tons of fun just flying around. They especially like to roll over in the air. They also fly in rollercoaster patterns and in swooping loop-the-loops.

Ravens like to swing, but they don't need a swing set to do it. They lean backward off a perch and swing upside down by their feet just for the fun of it. They even swing by their beaks from branches!

Ravens often save food in the top of a rotting stump, in a clump of tall grass, or in a hole dug in dirt or snow. With their excellent memories, they have no trouble finding their meals later on. What's more, ravens watch where other ravens hide food—and then they steal it.

Sometimes a raven can be too clever. A scientist named Konrad Lorenz kept a raven named Roah to study it. One day, Roah picked up some wet laundry that had fallen off Dr. Lorenz's clothesline. The scientist rewarded the helpful bird with food. Big mistake. After that, Roah showered the scientist with wet laundry from all the neighborhood clotheslines! A raven may look plain—but oh, what a brain!

## Rubric - Brief Constructed Response (BCR)

### Score 3

The response demonstrates an understanding of the complexities of the text.

- Addresses the demands of the question
- Effectively uses text-relevant<sup>1</sup> information to clarify or extend understanding

### Score 2

The response demonstrates a general understanding of the text.

- Partially addresses the demands of the question
- Uses text-relevant<sup>1</sup> information to show understanding

### Score 1

The response demonstrates a minimal understanding of the text.

- Minimally addresses the demands of the question
- Uses minimal information to show some understanding of the text in relation to the question

### Score 0

The response is completely incorrect, irrelevant to the question, or missing.<sup>2</sup>

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Text-relevant: This information may or may not be an exact copy (quote) of the text but is clearly related to the text and often shows an analysis and/or interpretation of important ideas. Students may incorporate information to show connections to relevant prior experience as appropriate.

<sup>2</sup> An exact copy (quote) or paraphrase of the question that provides no new relevant information will receive a score of "0".

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